



State Library of Massachusetts - Special Collections Department

Ms. Coll. 14

Special Commission Appointed to Study and Report upon Accommodations and Facilities in a Suitable Building or Wing on the State House Grounds at the Corner of Derne and Bowdoin Streets for Housing the Supreme Judicial Court, the Land Court, and the Reporter of Decisions Records, 1920-1931: Guide

COLLECTION SUMMARY

Creator: Massachusetts. General Court. Special Commission Appointed to Study and Report upon Accommodations and Facilities in a Suitable Building or Wing on the State House Grounds at the Corner of Derne and Bowdoin Streets for Housing the Supreme Judicial Court, the Land Court, and the Reporter of Decisions.

Call Number: Ms. Coll. 14

Extent: 1 box (1.5 linear feet)

Preferred Citation Style: *Folder Title, Box Number #*. Special Commission for Court Facilities. State Library of Massachusetts Special Collections.

About This Finding Aid: Description based on DACS.

Processed by: Finding aid prepared by Marc Widershien, July 11, 1986. Updated by Abigail Cramer, March, 2012.

Abstract: This collection documents the activities of the Special Commission in their efforts to investigate improving the state judicial facilities in Massachusetts.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Commission, being a small one and of limited duration, did not generate a great amount of materials. The State Library has in its possession very few documents. All of the correspondence is to State Librarian Redstone. There is a report of the Special Commission and an account of its meetings as well as data on floor space allotment and memorabilia having to do with other state libraries. But even with this limited amount of material, the user can learn much from studying this collection. Finally, the State Library has made available to researchers the original proposed addition to the State House as received from the architectural firms of Adden, Parker, Clinch and Crimp. There are nine sheets of floor plans and a sketch of the proposed building called "Plan of Land in Boston State House Grounds, July 28, 1930."

HISTORICAL NOTE

In the early 1920s, many people, legislators and public alike, felt that the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court should have more suitable facilities. "The spectacle of the Supreme Judicial Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts living in rented quarters supplied by Suffolk County is humiliating. The quarters are not only miserably inadequate, and wholly unbecoming the dignity of the Court, but they occupy space much needed by the County of Suffolk," wrote Attorney James D. Colt to State Librarian E.H. Redstone in March 1922. The Commission to investigate space requirements was not formed until 1930. The Senate President appointed Senator J. Bradford Davis of Haverhill. The Speaker chose three people: Representatives Shattuck of Boston, Butler of Leominster, and Mullen of Boston, and Governor Frank G. Allen appointed five people: Henry A. Wyman, Robert L. Whipple, Michael H. Sullivan, Thomas W. Proctor and Edward H. Redstone, State Librarian. These appointments were in keeping with Chapter 54 of the Resolves and were approved on May 26, 1930.

Although the amount of material in the Collection is slight, the Commission's aims were extensive. There was the problem of finding available and suitable land near the State House. The firm of Aspinwall and Lincoln conducted topographical surveys. The firm of Adden, Parker, Clinch and Crimp was selected to draw up preliminary plans and sketches. Many plans were considered including an "easterly wing connected with the north end of the Brigham Extension."

The Commission, in trying to determine what other states were doing, visited the Supreme Court and Library in Hartford and studied the plans of other states.

The Commission considered the benefits and drawback as well as the feasibility of erecting a new building. It concluded that the Banks and Devens statues and the Beacon Column would have to be relocated, with a possible closing of Ashburton Place, Mount Vernon Street and Bowdoin Street. Architecturally, building a bridge or tunnel connecting the new building with the State House would result in an unsatisfactory appearance, and the problem of easy access for the courts and the State Library would remain. Another East Wing was also considered. In the end, the problem remained unresolved.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Arrangement

The records are arranged in their original order.

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research during the Special Collections Department's regular hours.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use

Copyright restrictions may apply. Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be discussed with Special Collections staff.

Languages and Scripts

The materials are entirely in English.

Container List

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title	Date
1	1	Report of the Special Commission	January 1931
1	2	Correspondence	1920-1922
1	3	Members of the Commission, Meetings	July-December 1930
1	4	Memorabilia	January 1921-July 1923
1	5	Location of Supreme Courts	undated

1	6	Acts of Virginia Assembly	1920
1	7	Allotment of floor space	undated
1	8	Proposed addition to State House (1 drawing, nine sheets)	July 28, 1930